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LIVE



News | Coronavirus pandemic

Thousands protest amid global anger against COVID restrictions

People take to the streets in Australia, France, Italy and the UK in protests against lockdowns and vaccine pass schemes.



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Gas and water cannon to disperse protesters in the capital Paris.

In France, an estimated 160,000 took to the streets in nationwide protests against President Emmanuel Macron's health pass that will drastically curtail access to restaurants and public spaces for unvaccinated people.

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"Freedom, freedom", chanted demonstrators in France, carrying placards denouncing "Macron, Tyrant", "Big Pharma shackles freedom" or saying "No to the pass of shame".

A similar scheme, called "green pass", has sparked angry demonstrations across Italy. People in Rome, Naples and Turin chanted "freedom" and "down with the dictatorship" over plans for the so-called "green pass".

The certificate will be needed from early next month to eat in restaurants and

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Demonstrators say the UK government's track and trace app is limiting their movements, with more than 600,000 told to self-isolate in one week alone this month. The protests come a week after most Coronavirus restrictions in England were lifted.

Earlier, dozens of protesters were arrested after an unauthorised march in Sydney, Australia's largest city. Organisers had dubbed the protest a "freedom" rally. Attendees carried signs and banners reading "Wake up Australia" and "No more lockdowns".

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Medical developments, troubling variants, the human impact—it's all here.

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“When you think about it, the options to this pass is that we close restaurants, we stop large gatherings. We have to give somewhere if we want to get ahead of this virus,” Larson said.

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02:09

France rolls out new COVID-19 health pass as infections surge

Gabriel Scally, a visiting professor of public health at the University of Bristol, told Al Jazeera that there was nothing new to the opposition to the pandemic measures.

“I think these rallies are relatively small. All the way through the pandemic, we have seen small groups of people who have taken to the streets to express their opposition to various things,” he said.

“Some believe that the virus does not exist, that COVID-19 doesn’t exist. Some think that it’s a conspiracy from all sorts of people, including Bill Gates...

“It isn’t anything new. There has been opposition to vaccines in history. It’s new and people are dealing with various issues. There are always a small group of

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French virus infections are spiking and hospitalisations are rising anew.

The government is trying to speed up vaccination to protect vulnerable populations and hospitals and avoid new lockdowns.

Most French adults are fully vaccinated and polls indicate a majority of French people support the new measures.

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They included far-right politicians and activists as well as some others angry at President Emmanuel Macron for various reasons.

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Meanwhile, about 5,000 people demonstrated in Athens, carrying placards tout-
ing slogans such as, “Don’t touch our children”, according to an AFP journalist
at the scene.

In Sydney, demonstrators pelted officers with pot plants and bottles of water as
they defied a month-long stay-at-home order, a day after authorities suggested
the restrictions could remain in place until October.

New South Wales state Premier Gladys Berejiklian said she was “utterly dis-
gusted” by the protesters whose “selfish actions have compromised the safety of
all of us”.

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Anti-vaccine demonstrators shout slogans during a protest against coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccinations in Athens, Greece [Costas Baltas/Reuters]

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